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**STATEMENT ON THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:
*NAEP 2011 Mathematics and Reading: Trial Urban District Assessment***

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Although I am a proud member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), today I am speaking to you as a parent. My husband and I have three children who have been or continue to be students in Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland. Two graduated high school – one this year – and now are both college students. The third is a high school junior.

Today's results for the 2011 Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) are especially meaningful because they represent NAEP at its most local level. Leaders and educators from 21 urban school districts nationwide will be able to see academic performance in two very important subjects, reading and math. These NAEP results are instructive and underscore Governing Board Chair Dave Driscoll's ongoing commitment to make a difference with NAEP. He just doesn't want data to be released without any response from the public. He hopes the findings spark appropriate action on the part of policymakers, teachers and parents to improve educational achievement.

Speaking of parents, the Board now has an Ad Hoc Committee on NAEP Parent Engagement, which I chair. The goal of the committee is to develop strategies the Governing Board and NAEP representatives can undertake to increase parent awareness about the urgency to improve student achievement and reduce achievement gaps by race, ethnicity and income levels. And that goal is indeed urgent.

NAEP is an important resource for parents. Over the years, the Board has heard many anecdotes of NAEP data being used by school districts as one factor to inform decisions about instruction, curriculum or allocation of resources. We've also heard about parents looking at NAEP results and test questions, for example, and inquiring about the rigor of what's being taught in a particular subject.

If you look at the Mathematics TUDA report, there's a grade 4 math problem that asks students to perform a subtraction problem using two four-digit numbers. It's eye-opening to see the variation in student performance by TUDA district. The percentage of correct responses in each of the districts ranged from 41 percent to 77 percent. Parents in the lower performing districts should ask tough questions about why their students did not perform well on this math problem.

I was also struck by responses to a grade 8 reading question requiring students to explain whether the author of a passage presents a convincing argument about recycling electronic waste. Only 17 percent of students in the nation showed full comprehension on this task. And if you examine the results by TUDA district, you'll see that in some districts the percentage is even lower and sometimes in the single digits.

Some of NAEP's background variables in the Data Explorer show how various factors, including those in the household, relate to student achievement. When looking at the frequency of 4th graders who talk about studies at home, for example, you see larger average scale scores for students who report they have these household discussions more often.

The important message is that parents can make a difference. These TUDA districts represent millions of students nationwide, many of whom face challenges and limited resources. Let's use these important and compelling data to improve student performance all across our nation. Let's move beyond the results to real progress.